



TITLE:

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CITATION:

Nakatani, Ayami. Private of Public?: Defining Female Roles in the Balinese Ritual Domain.
東南アジア研究 1997, 34(4): 722-740

ISSUE DATE:

1997-03

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/56616>

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Private or Public? : Defining Female Roles in the Balinese Ritual Domain*

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Abstract

While earlier scholarly works pay some attention to the Balinese "family," they are mainly concerned with the composition and internal dynamics of the household, in contrast to the community as a whole. In other words, a distinct boundary is drawn between activities within the "domestic" units and those in a wider "public" domain. And not surprisingly, the domestic sphere is considered primarily as the world of women, whereas the public domain is where men are active in civil or political activities.

According to my own findings from a rural village in Central-Eastern Bali, however, women's contribution to religious activities, which take up a substantial amount of time and energy in their daily lives, easily transcends this assumed boundary. Women represent their households in a network of kinship and neighbourhood, and ensure the maintenance of these ties through their participation in the rituals at temples and other households. Preparations of rituals and formal gift-giving take place in the household compounds except for those related to major temple ceremonies. In this respect, the "domestic" place is transformed into a "public" arena, where the enactment and the reinforcement of a complex web of inter-household relations are at play. This paper thus attempts to shed light on the women's ritual-related activities that reveal *both* the private and public nature of the household, and their roles in defining and shaping the relationships between households.

Introduction

It has long been pointed out that the "civil" or socio-political aspect of Balinese community life is inseparable from its religious character [Barth 1993: 32; Geertz 1973: 400; Geertz and Geertz 1975: 12; Goris 1960: 79–83; Liefcrinck 1927: 258; Stuart-Fox 1987: 28–29; Warren 1993: 139].¹⁾ The land on which the villagers reside is understood to belong to the gods; thus its inhabitants are obliged to pay homage to these gods and to please them by presenting offerings [Belo

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the joint workshop on "Indonesian women in the household and beyond: Reconstructing the boundaries," organised by WIVS (Interdisciplinary Forum on Indonesian Women's Studies) and KITLV (Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology) in Leiden, 25–29 September 1995. The author acknowledges with gratitude the useful comments and suggestions from the participants of the workshop. The field research on which this paper is based was carried out under the auspices of Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) in Jakarta and Pusat Penelitian Universitas Udayana in Denpasar. The research was funded by the INPEX Foundation (Tokyo) and the WOM/ACT Fund administered by the Royal Anthropological Institute (London).

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1) It must be noted, however, that the Dutch view of Balinese village community (*desa*) as an egalitarian and corporate entity has been criticised as a colonial and Orientalist invention. See Boon [1977], Schulte Nordholt [1986] and Warren [1993].

1953: 1; Goris 1960: 81]. A different set of offerings are made to appease demonic or nether-worldly forces to avert their malicious interference with human life. The deceased members of the community will gain divine status after being purified by a series of proper ceremonies. Those who have not been cremated and thus still impure are potentially dangerous; their souls must be redeemed by offerings, otherwise they may disturb the life of the living. In short, a harmonious relationship between human members of the community and the invisible beings is “the absolute prerequisite for the prosperity and well-being of human society” [Stuart-Fox 1987: 29]. The maintenance of such ritual and cosmic order is ensured by the implementation of periodic temple rituals by the community, the presentation of offerings on relevant religious occasions as well as on a daily basis by individual households, and the proper enactment of post-mortem ceremonies by the family of the deceased.

In addition, a variety of rituals fill the course of human life between birth and death. A series of life passage rituals (*manusa yadnya*) starts during the pregnancy and continues until the child gets married. It is primarily the parents’ responsibility that their children undergo these rituals, which protect them and mark the process of becoming full human adults. Another series of rituals called *pitra yadnya* starts after one’s death; the deceased person’s family, foremost his/her children, are obliged to complete it so that the dead soul will become completely purified and join the realm of gods. For both types of rituals, the host household of the ceremony relies on the contributions in kind and labour from its fellow villagers as well as its extended family members. These ceremonial ties between households are maintained on strictly reciprocal terms from generation to generation. In this respect, it can be said that the implementation of rituals focusing on living and dead (*manusa yadnya* and *pitra yadnya*) serves to reinforce the existing network of ritual relations in the community.

The basic unit which is subject to such prescribed duties is a household based on a hearth-group called *kuren* (see below). Each household sends a man-woman pair (*bulengkepan*) for the preparations of ceremonies in the temples of various kinds, ranging from communal village temples and descent group temples, to the other temples which it is obliged to support. Likewise, both male and female members of the household must make a formal visit to the hosts of life crisis rituals and help in the preparations. Most importantly, the membership of various social organisations — *banjar* (the smallest administrative units), *subak* (irrigation associations) and *pamaksan* (temple support groups) — is assigned only to the conjugal pair. Therefore, the Balinese household centring around the husband-wife pair is not only a unit of production, reproduction and consumption, but also composes the most basic unit in the jural-political and religious domains.

While Balinese custom-law (*adat*) stipulates the joint responsibility of a married couple for socio-political and religious duties, the earlier ethnography of Bali has often associated men (as the heads of the households) with the role of *representing* households “before the law and before the gods” [Covarrubias 1937: 156] or “over matters that concern their relationships with other compounds and houses, with the outside” [Yoshida and Duff-Cooper 1989: 229; see also Foster 1979: 179]. In the same vein, Hobart [1979: 328] drew the following symbolic equation:

women : men :: inside : outside :: private : public.

Geertz and Geertz [1975] further drew a distinct boundary between the private and public domains.²⁾

. . . These [compound] walls mark the division between the public world of village affairs and the private world of the family.

The Balinese hold that what goes on within their houseyards is the concern only of those directly involved; what goes on outside, in the marketplace and coffee shop at the crossroad, or out in the rice fields, is the concern of the public. The distinction between the domain of domestic matters and that which is civil or public is very explicitly institutionalised in Bali. [Geertz and Geertz 1975 : 46]

As far as inter-personal relationships are concerned, it is true that the nature of such relationships among household members differs from those observed in streets and other communal places; people tend to keep what they regard as their private affairs among the “insiders” as opposed to the “outsiders,” i.e. unrelated persons. Nonetheless, I shall argue that the boundary demarcating what the Balinese villagers perceive as the inside or the private domain from the outside, public world is much less clear-cut than the Geertzies contend.³⁾ In the ritual context, in particular, the very applicability of such a conceptual dichotomy as private/public is questionable because of an essentially ambiguous nature of ritual undertakings: one cannot easily label a certain ritual activity as an entirely private or public venture. While preparations for most rituals and formal gift-giving normally take place in the house compound, such a seemingly “domestic” or “private” arena acquires a more communal character where a complex web of inter-household relations based on past marriages and historical connections are re-enacted and reinforced.

This paper aims to deal with two sets of social relations — kinship grouping and inter-household ties — both of which are essential for the successful fulfilment of religious obligations. First, the paper attempts to contextualise the concept of the household within the whole range of domestic groupings each of which can act as a unified unit in the ritual domain. The second area of analysis is the formation and maintenance of ceremonial ties between the households, involved in mutual assistance on ritual occasions. Despite the stated emphasis on agnatic links in Balinese kinship, the importance of familial relations through females in ritual and social, if not jural, domains will be made explicit. Finally, I will discuss the significance of female roles in the upkeep of such inter-household relations, contributing to the maintenance and even the enhancement of the position of a given household in the community.

2) For the Geertzies, however, it is the house compound (*pakarangan*), rather than the individual household, that encircles a private sphere.

3) Following a well-known article by Michelle Rosaldo [1974], there has been an extensive debate over the universal applicability of the private (or domestic)/public dichotomy as a conceptual framework for analysing women's inferior position in society. Responding to criticisms, Rosaldo later modified her own arguments [Rosaldo 1980]. For a succinct summary of the debate, see Moore [1988 : 21–24]. I do not deny that there exist some distinct domains in Balinese social life, which the villagers themselves differentiate; yet I would argue that these domains do not directly correspond with the Western notion of private/public divisions.

The Research Area

The primary data on which the discussion in this paper is based were gathered in a village called “Singarsa” (pseudonym) in the central-eastern part of Bali. Its population was a little more than 9,000 in 1991–93. All four categories of people (*warna*) reside here, which is not always the case with other villages in Bali [see Geertz 1959: 997].⁴⁾ The three upper categories (*brahmana*, *satria*, and *wésia*) are often grouped together and called *triwangsa*, as opposed to *jaba* (an alternative designation of the lowest category, *sudra*). Each group tends to cluster together, though *jaba* households, being the majority, are spread throughout the village territory. *Brahmana* compounds are only found in a particular area and they exclusively form their own *banjar*. Similarly, most *satria* houses are built close to the local court (called the *Jero Gedé*, literally “the great house”) of the former overlord. The *Jero Gedé* claims its ancestry back to the royal dynasty of the Déwa Agung of Klungkung, and hence to the legendary migrants from Majapahit.

Having a relatively powerful court, its associate noble families, and a sizeable number of *brahmana*, Singarsa exhibits a full range of stratification. Its inhabitants’ preoccupation with status considerations is such that the issue of hierarchy is of great importance across all *warna*. Codes of conduct concerning inter-*warna* relationships are strictly observed. In daily social interaction as well as in ritual scenes, a non-Balinese observer like myself can easily tell the relative status of the persons involved by paying attention to their styles of speech, physical posture, and seating positions. Apart from the matters of general etiquette, status distinctions are acutely expressed in the domains of religion, such as differing length of death pollution and the choice of ritual paraphernalia, and of kinship and marriage. The notion of hierarchy that places the *brahmana* at the top and the *sudra* at the bottom is unequivocally embraced by all *warna*, though dominant lines of the *satria* and the *wésia* demand due respect from the *warna* immediately above them.

This village, with a post office, two banks, and a dozen small shops, serves as a centre for the entire sub-district (*kecamatan*, Ind.) which contains three other villages.⁵⁾ Although agriculture (both wet rice cultivation and dry land farming) is a major productive activity of this area, as in most other parts of Bali, a large number of households in Singarsa, especially those in its central parts, derive a substantial proportion of their income from off-farm employment. In particular, Singarsa is characterised by small-scale textile production, which has grown into a notable home-based industry during the past two decades. The hand-weaving of *songket* (supplemented weft *ikat* with gold threads, woven on a backstrap loom) and *endek* (simple weft *ikat* woven on an ATBM or a treadle loom) provides the village women and, to some extent, men with an important income-generating

4) The system of hierarchical divisions in Bali is most commonly recognised as that of “caste.” However, the applicability of the notion of “caste” to the Balinese system of ranking is questionable, mainly because of the problematic nature of the term “caste” itself [Nakatani 1995a: 56–58]. The limited scope of this paper does not allow me to address this issue properly; in the text, the vernacular term, *warna* (colour, estates) will be used to denote these social categories. On the Balinese system of hierarchy, see Geertz [1973], Howe [1985], and Schulte Nordholt [1986].

5) In this paper, the “village” refers to a territorial unit of the Indonesian local administration (*desa dinas*) instead of a customary-law village (*desa adat*) which operates with a set of traditional regulations.

activity. Throughout Singarsa except for its remoter parts and Muslim quarters, it is common to see women of different generations working on traditional backstrap looms (*cagcag*) side by side. It is *songket* cloths that they weave at home in this way. Typically, several looms are located on the elevated ground of an open pavilion (*balé*) or on the veranda in front of walled rooms. There are also many women who weave inside their own rooms. Most *endek* weavers work on the premises of the workshop, though some married women borrow ATBM and weave in their own compound.⁶⁾

The weaving industry in Singarsa has developed since the early 1970s, against a backdrop of the improvement of infrastructure and developing tourist industry in the island of Bali. It has also coincided with the transformation of the overall village economy. The expansion of the civil service (local administrators, school teachers, medical specialists and police force), for example, has brought a considerable cash in-flow to the local economy [see also Cole 1983: 162–165; Edmondson 1992: 6]. Seeing the option of stable, white-collar jobs, the villagers' aspiration to better education for their children and to a modernised life style have been enhanced; hence the need for cash has increased. More and more women have been encouraged to work as weavers to earn cash income. Relatively high economic returns from this sector have further stimulated the expansion of household consumption above subsistence, in areas such as sophisticated clothing, modern household utensils, and better housing. The changing economic situation at both village and household levels also influences the implementation of Hindu rituals, as we shall see later.

Dynamics of Kin Groups

The Household

Apart from communal temples, public offices, schools and shops, the territory of a *banjar* (a sub-unit of the village) is divided into walled house compounds (*pakarangan*) with high and narrow gates facing each other on opposite sides of alley ways. These enclosed compounds house one or more households and a small family temple.

It is difficult to devise a unified definition of the Balinese household.⁷⁾ The vernacular term, “*kuren*,” denotes a domestic group consisting of a married couple who constitute an elementary unit of social organisation, and of their dependants who eat from a single kitchen or hearth (*paon*).⁸⁾ The formation of a new household as defined above takes place when the son gets married. The post-marital residence is normally virilocal; all married sons and their wives establish separate *kuren*, though the newly-weds may eat with the husband's parents for a while until they build a new kitchen.⁹⁾

6) For more detailed descriptions and discussions concerning the textile production in Singarsa, see Nakatani [1995b; 1995c].

7) Difficulties involved in the attempted search for a universal definition of the household cross-culturally are discussed in Moore [1988: 54–56], Roberts [1991], and Yanagisako [1979: 162–166, 200].

8) The verbal form of *kuren*, *makurenan*, means “to get married,” and *kurenan* denotes a spouse, either male or female.

9) The notable exception to this is what is called *nyentana* (from *sentana*, “successor”) marriage, in which the husband marries into his wife's family. In this case, the wife is considered to be a male heir for legal purposes. But this form of marriage is not practised in Singarsa.

From an administrative point of view, village households are represented by male heads, termed *kepala keluarga* (Ind., "head of the family") or simply *KK*. This is based on the national marriage law (Undang-Undang No. 1/1974) which stipulates that the husband is the head of the family (*kepala keluarga*), while the wife is the matron of the household (*ibu rumah tangga*) (Article 31).¹⁰⁾ *KK* is also held to mean the household itself as it appears in the official census. For example, Banjar Tengah of Singarsa village counted 172 *KK* according to the village record in 1989. Given an official assumption that *kepala keluarga* should be male, a female-headed household is automatically incorporated into the woman's father's or married brother's household, even when the former operates independently from the latter. Moreover, being fixed from birth and modified only by marriage, official membership of *KK* does not correspond accurately with the shifting composition of the household [Cole 1983: 194]. When an unmarried daughter, for instance, moves into her aunt's household, contributing to the household production and sharing consumption, she is still counted as a member of her father's household (*KK*) in the official record.¹¹⁾

The composition of *KK* largely overlaps with *kuren* under normal circumstances. According to the local regulations, however, a widowed woman whose son is still unmarried remains as a half-member (*panyelé* or *aselé*) of the hamlet council (*banjar*). In other words, her household is acknowledged as an independent one. She is also subject to the prescribed duties of the *banjar*, though the amount of material contribution is half of married members and total exemption from labour service is allowed. She also performs all other ritual obligations incurred by her relations with various temples and other households.

In any case, individual households form economically autonomous units in the day-to-day context, though they may rely on co-operation from other households within the same compound or beyond on some ritual occasions or for the children's education.¹²⁾

House Compounds

When two or more households occupy the house compound (*pakarangan*), heads of the component households normally trace common ancestry through their fathers. They are together responsible for worshipping at and maintaining the family temple (*mrajan* or *sanggah*) in their compound. Importantly, the compound as a whole often acts as a unified unit in the ritual context. Apart from the implementation of prescribed ceremonies for their family temple, one of such occasions is the ceremonial gift-giving to distantly-related households. Instead of taking gifts individually, one of the wives may represent all the households in her compound in visiting the hosts of the ceremony and

10) The word, *ibu rumah tangga*, is normally translated as a housewife, but, in this context, it seems to denote the one who manages the household.

11) For the purpose of including the domestic group headed by a divorced or widowed woman, my own household survey defined the household loosely as the group of people who share residence, eat from a single kitchen, and work for the maintenance of the well-being of its members. The distribution of different types of household composition in one of the *banjar* is shown in Nakatani [1995a: 64].

12) As noted earlier, children (more often girls than boys) may be invited to live with their uncle or aunt (either maternal or paternal) to help with the housework and other chores; in return, they are fed and provided with financial assistance for their schooling.

giving them the gift. The cost of the gift is then divided equally among the represented households. One can also observe a high degree of co-operation and intimacy between these households in other contexts, such as the exchange of cooked and uncooked food, joint-preparation of certain offerings, and the mutual care of young children [see also Geertz and Geertz 1975: 56–57].

Clusters of House Compounds

When a married son wants to establish his own household with a separate kitchen and his parents' compound is already over-crowded, he will move to a vacated or newly built compound. The residents of the new compound then worship at and maintain the new family temple in their own compound, but they also retain ritual ties with the temple in the original compound, which is now regarded as their *kawitan* or "origin-point" [*ibid.*: 47, 52]. Members of descending households continue to worship at the original temple; thus a cluster of house compounds is formed through a process of fission over time. These compounds are linked by mutual obligation toward the temple of their origin-point (*mrajan gedé* or *sanggah gedé*, both meaning "great family temple").

Those households and compounds which can trace an immediate genealogical link (through fathers and grandfathers) are called *sawaris* or *warisan*, because they are entitled to claim the inheritance (*warisan*) from one another, if a particular family has no sons. The internal relationships of this inheritance group are generally close and corporate. At the same time, disputes over inheritance or other matters are not uncommon; the ties between the compounds concerned may be suspended (*puik*) as a result. In such a case, all the individuals of the opposing compounds, even though not directly involved in the conflict itself, must cease to socialise with one another. Such breaches of the relationships are normally healed by subsequent events, but may last for years or even for generations.

Dadia/Title Groups

House compound clusters may further expand beyond the circle related to the common property or immediate ancestry.

The original houseyard from which the new houseyards have hived off is referred to as the core (*kemulan*, literally, "beginning," "first") houseyard. It is here that the core temple representing the origin-point of the members of the entire houseyard cluster is maintained. Should the group continue to grow, a process of secondary dispersal takes place so that in some cases a fully developed pattern is produced of a set of subcores united by the central core. [*ibid.*: 53]

As a result of the process explained by the Geertz in the above quotation, the expansion and subsequent dispersal of house compound clusters (or "houseyard clusters" in the Geertz' term) form a large agnatic kin group, centring around the mutual origin-point at the core. Among the *jaba* (*sudra*), this form of grouping is usually called the *dadia*, each bearing a specific name or title. The households who belong to the same *dadia* may not provide unambiguous explanations about their genealogical relationships with one another, but they all know that they can trace common ancestry, however remote. Among the *triwangsa* and some powerful commoner *dadia*, members of the title

groups sharing common ancestors tend to see their linkage with the origin-point as a unilinear line descending from the founding ancestor to the present generation. Some families own *lontar* scripts which record their genealogy; others even take pains to lay out neat genealogical charts [see also Hobart 1979: 316], though there are always possibilities of manipulation for political ends [see Boon 1977: 163ff; Schulte Nordholt 1986: 13]. Apart from the title names such as Satria Dalem for *satria*, Arya Bang Sidemen or Arya Pinatih for *wésia*, their group identity is also symbolised by their ancestral temple (*mrajan gedé* or *mrajan agung*); the component households and compounds of a given title group are sometimes referred to as *samrajan* (literally, “the same family temple”).

The internal hierarchy of the descent group corresponds with the temples at different levels of increasing proximity to the “origin-point (*kawitan*).” At the lowest level, each house compound (*pakarangan*) houses a small temple in its north-eastern corner — the holy orientation point. This can be just a few altars made of bamboo with thatch or tin roofs. Most *triwangsa* and several wealthy *jaba* households have a complex of elaborate shrines built with expensive materials. The process of fission as described above forms a cluster of house compounds that are agnatically related and linked by common obligation toward the original family temple (*kawitan*). The further the descent group expands, the greater the number of the households supporting this temple becomes. For *jaba*, the formation of *dadia* as a result of such a development of the descent group is symbolised by the building of a *dadia* temple (*pura dadia*) on the village land. In the case of *triwangsa*, the process of differentiation is exactly the same, except that the origin-point temple remains in the core household and is supported and worshipped at not only by its descendant households but also by *jaba* households who retain ritual ties with them. The support of descendant or subordinate households is expressed by their participation in the preparation of annual temple celebrations (*odalan*) and by their offerings brought to the temple on those occasions (see below).

Kin Groups at Work in Rituals

As mentioned earlier, it is primarily the individual household that is subject to a variety of ritual obligations: e.g. presenting daily offerings in one’s compound, preparing and taking family offerings to temples on their annual celebrations (*odalan*) and other ritual occasions, and giving gifts to the hosts of life passage rituals. Yet when it comes to the implementation of the *odalan* for descent group temples and of large-scale life cyclical rituals, other agnatic kin groups beyond the household play major roles as the ritual sponsors.

Life Cyclical Rituals

The clusters of households, especially those who share the claim to common inheritance (*sawaris*), often stage jointly large-scale rituals such as tooth-filing rites (*matatah*) and cremations (*ngabén*) by pooling resources. This is mainly because these rituals require a considerable amount of expense which is normally beyond the means of individual households. Therefore, although tooth-filing rites are supposed to be held for children when they come of age, it is common to wait until the youngest

child becomes eligible and all the siblings together with their cousins have their teeth filed at one time. Certain rites can also be combined with others to reduce the total cost. For example, *moton gedé* (hair-cutting ceremonies) are typically combined with tooth-filing rites. Upon the death of a family member, an elaborate cremation may be financed by the sale of the irrigated rice field (*sawah*) owned by the deceased. If he/she possessed no land nor can the living members of the family afford the cost of a cremation, the corpse will be buried as a temporary measure. A proper rite must be postponed until the agnatically-related households put together enough resources to sponsor a joint cremation for several family members who have died during the past decade or so.

Temple Ceremonies

The temple ceremonies are prepared and implemented by members of the congregation that is responsible for the maintenance of a given temple, be it the descent group, the temple support group (*pamaksan*), or the entire *désa adat* (custom-law village). Every temple marks a special day of celebration, called *odalan*, once a “year” according to either the Javanese-Balinese calendar or the lunar-solar calendar. It is on this day that the temple is “activated” [Geertz 1973: 395]: deities descend to inhabit their seats (*palinggih*) at the temple and to be entertained by humans. *Odalan* for any temple requires similar financial arrangements and preparation procedures, although there are minor variations according to the types of the temples. In the case of the descent group temple, the expenses for annual *odalan* are covered by an equal contribution from each member household. The contribution is usually made in cash with which necessary materials are bought collectively. Voluntary donations of coconuts, bananas, or other useful items may also be made according to individual circumstances.

A major part of the preparation for *odalan* consists of the creation of a massive number of offerings — cutting and plaiting palm leaves to make containers, slicing fruits and other ingredients, shaping cooked rice and rice dough into prescribed forms, and finally sorting them into different groups of offerings. These tasks are carried out by women. Men are in charge of decorating shrines, erecting bamboo platforms as stands for offerings, slaughtering animals and cooking ceremonial meals. The intensive preparation starts seven to ten days before the actual ceremony and continues, with some intervals, until the day of *odalan*. During the preparation period, communal work sessions are organised in the compound where the descent group temple is situated; a man and woman pair must participate in such preparatory work, representing each *kuren*. Noteworthy is that both sexes do not necessarily go and work on every working day, for they engage in separate tasks that are organised differently. Any member of the household who has passed puberty can perform obligatory labour, though the married couple takes prime responsibility. Cross-sexual replacement is not permitted, however, due to the strict gender division of labour.

The scale of ritual determines the number and types of offerings required, although certain sets of offerings are essential even for the simplest *odalan*. The level of ritual elaboration largely correlates with the size of congregation. For descent group temples, the temples at higher levels (or at closer distance to the origin-point) can afford more elaboration, because a larger number of households are obliged to come and help in the preparation; hence a greater contribution of both

cash and labour is available. Likewise, the number of family offerings taken in on the day of *odalan* is likely to correspond with the level of inclusiveness of a given temple.

To reiterate, the implementation of necessary ceremonies for the descent group temple is ensured by groups of households, which trace common ancestry through patriline and which share responsibilities for the temple in question. Such grouping ranges from a few households which have immediate agnatic links and worship at a small family temple together, to the *dadia* or the title group whose component households are tied by the collective obligation toward the origin-point temple. In any case, the individual household does not stand alone; its co-operation with other related households is essential for the fulfilment of prescribed obligations.

Furthermore, mobilisation of ritual labour for such temples goes beyond the agnatic kin groups. Daughters and sisters who married non-kin and took formal leave of their ancestral shrines still actively contribute to lengthy preparations. Helpers from outside the agnatic kin circle also include those who are in “*sidikara*” relationships: households who acknowledge equal and reciprocal ties, including one’s affines. It is also notable that *triwangsa* compounds can claim labour of their “*braya*,” that is, the *jaba* households who are sanctioned to worship (*mabakti*) in the former’s family temple. Importantly, these ceremonial ties complement more overt social groupings such as agnatic kin groups. While the latter is defined by kinship through patri-filiation, *sidikara* and *braya* are networks of dyadic relations, primarily defined by marriage, and sustained by ritual acts. I shall now turn to these two types of ceremonial relations in the following section.

Formation of Ceremonial Ties between the Households

Sidikara Partnerships

In Singarsa, formerly unrelated households form a *sidikara* tie upon the marriage of the children from those households. If the marriage is approved by both parties and they are of equal standing in *warna* status, they start to invite each other on ceremonial occasions. At this stage, the households concerned are said to become *sidikara* to each other, or “have become one” (*dados asiki*).

The *sidikara* relationship is characterised by the maintenance of reciprocity between the parties concerned, involving two important obligations:

1. *saling nyumbah*: worship or pay reverence to the ancestors and the deceased members of each other’s family
2. *parid-mamarid*: eat the offerings retrieved after being dedicated to the deceased and ancestors or having had their essence consumed by the living members of each other’s family (see below).¹³⁾

Nyumbah is an act of homage to the deceased and ancestors. According to Bali-Hindu ceremonial practices, only those who are “junior” to the deceased can *nyumbah*. That is, the act of *nyumbah* cannot be made from parents to children, from husband to wife, from uncles/aunts to nephews/nieces, and from older siblings to younger siblings. Neither do the *triwangsa* persons *nyumbah*

13) For more detailed analyses of *sidikara* relations with reference to the earlier literature, see Nakatani [1995a: 130–132].

toward the *jaba*, because the former is superior in *warna* status. Therefore, reciprocal exercise of *nyumbah* (i.e. *saling nyumbah*) underscores the equality and intimacy between the parties involved [see also Kagami 1995: 316].

The same idea applies to the second obligation: eating of *paridan*. *Paridan* are the offerings which have been dedicated to the deceased and ancestors or the essence of which has been consumed by the subject of life passage rites. At a wedding, for example, certain groups of offerings (collectively called *tataban*), containing roast pig, corn-shaped cooked rice, fruits, and various other components, are placed in front of the bride and groom, who waft the essence toward their body (*natab*). When the ceremony is over, those present grab whatever they like from these offerings and eat their share on the spot. At a burial or cremation, the offerings dedicated to the soul of the dead must also be consumed immediately; the remainder should not be taken home (unlike temple offerings for deities).

To understand the significance of eating *paridan*, it may be useful to see it in the context of the hierarchical order involved in food-sharing practices. In daily life, Balinese never exchange cooked food, unless they are in a very close relationship. Persons of inferior status may be offered a meal at their superior's house, but the reverse will never occur. Accepting cooked food, especially the left-overs, consolidates the receiver's subordinate status to the giver [Cole 1983: 354ff; Hobart 1980: 59; Gerdin 1981: 25; Nakamura 1989]. Partaken of not by deities but by humans and the ancestors of others, the *paridan* are, by extension, open to a question of hierarchy. Therefore, only those who are on equal terms or acknowledge their inferior status may share such offerings.¹⁴⁾ Naturally, "*parid-mamari*" (eat each other's *paridan*) relationships must be maintained on strictly reciprocal terms; otherwise equality between the households in a *sidikara* partnership will be spoiled.

Gusti-Braya Ties

If the reciprocal consumption of *paridan* as well as mutual giving of obeisance to the ancestors ensure equality between the groups concerned, their unilateral exercise manifests absolute subordination. The latter type of relations obtains between the *triwangsa* households and their *braya*. *Braya* denotes a household or a group of households of *jaba* status who are related to a *triwangsa* household (their *gusti*, or "master") by affinal ties or by historical connections. For example, a *satria* woman may say, with reference to a certain *sudra* man, "*nika braya tiangé* (that is my *braya*)," differentiating him from other unrelated *sudra*. From the *braya*'s point of view, this *satria* woman or her family is explained as: "*gustin tiangé* (my master)" or "*tiang bakti marika* (I go and worship there)." As indicated by the latter expression, the *braya* are obliged to pay homage (*mabakti* or *nyumbah*)¹⁵⁾ to their *gusti*'s ancestors and to share the latter's *paridan*. They also help out with the

14) The case in point is the wedding of a hypergamous couple. On such occasions, two sets of identical offerings should be made for the bride and groom, for the family and the *sidikara* partners of the groom will not touch the offerings whose essence is wafted toward the woman of a lower-*warna*.

15) While both *mabakti* and *nyumbah* refer to the act of worship, the latter is more frequently used in a specific context of paying reverence to the dead and the ancestors.

life crisis rituals and temple ceremonies hosted by their *gusti*.

There exist at least three different processes in the formation of such *gusti-braya* ties. First, the descendants of the illegitimate offspring (*astra*) of *triwangsa* families become *braya*. Secondly, when a *triwangsa* man takes a wife from the *jaba*, the woman's agnates will become her husband's family's *braya*, provided that her family approves of the marriage.¹⁶⁾ The third case is concerned with the pre-colonial relationship between feudal lords and their vassals. Certain *jaba* families were linked to the powerful local lord who claimed service and loyalty from them. In return, the lord provided the material needs and the assurance of prominent status to those *jaba*. Often, such a tie was initiated or strengthened by the offering of a commoner wife to the lord [see Boon 1977: 125; Cole 1983: 200; Geertz and Geertz 1975: 133; Schulte Nordholt 1986: 16].

All the three types of relationship stated above (the third one, in particular) are historical in nature. Even though inter-*warna* marriages are now contracted more often than previously, they no longer entail a *gusti-braya* tie as such, especially when the marriage partners are from other villages. On the other hand, it must be noted that *braya* status of a *jaba* household *vis-à-vis* its *gusti* is passed on to all patrilineal offspring. In consequence, the groups of households involved in a certain *gusti-braya* relationship are constantly increasing on both sides. A common expression to explain such dyad relations based on the past marriages is: "*dumunan naen ngambil marika*" (before, we have taken a wife from that family) from a *triwangsa*'s view-point, or "*naen ambil*" (a woman has been once taken for marriage) from a *jaba*'s view-point.¹⁷⁾ Since it is also common that marriages are repeated between these groups, a specific union of the more recent past may be mentioned: "*nini tiangé saking dirika*" (my grandmother came from that family). Similarly, *sidikara* ties, once formed, will also be continued by descending lines of respective households. Both types of ceremonial ties are maintained and reinforced by the mutual participation in rituals, in which women play decisive roles.

Maintenance and Suspension of Ceremonial Ties

When the news of the latest marriage or death spreads by word of mouth, typically through women at the market on the morning after the occurrence of an event, the related households and most *banjar* members promptly pay a visit (*madelokan*) to the family concerned. These formal visitors are women in traditional attire appropriate for the occasion, with a tray containing gifts on the head. The households who are particularly close to the host send also male representatives, normally in the evenings. This initial gift-giving serves as a sign of acknowledging the event, joyful or sorrowful, by fellow villagers and concerns a wider circle of people than those related by agnatic, *sidikara*, or *braya-gusti* ties. But even at this level, co-*banjar* membership does not automatically entail gift-

16) Alternatively, the family of the in-marrying woman may cut off a relationship with her (*kutang*, "throw away") and remain unrelated to her husband's family. See Nakatani [1995a: Ch. 5] for greater details about the negative implications of inter-*warna* marriages.

17) "*Ambil*" means "to fetch" or "to take," but more specifically it also refers to taking a woman as one's wife [Kersten 1984: 147].

giving relationships. Women bring gifts only to the households where “they have ever been” (*naen marika*): a common expression suggesting the existence of ongoing ceremonial ties.

Such ceremonial ties, including a mere gift-giving relationship, are maintained by rigorous reciprocity. Even though *triwangsa* households do not return the act of sharing *paridan* or worship (*nyumbah*), they give donations in cash or in kind, including expensive gifts. They also offer assistance on the ceremonial occasions hosted by their *braya*, e.g. letting their compound be used for ceremonial feasts. In both horizontal and vertical relationships, the two parties involved must observe the rule of mutual invitations to life crisis rituals and gift-giving in response. When a certain household has a legitimate reason for not attending the ritual to which it was invited, one of its members should come to the host compound in advance to explain the situation.¹⁸⁾ Should either party fail to reciprocate the previous invitation or fail to attend the ritual despite the invitation, an existing tie will be immediately suspended (*puik*) or severed (*pegat*). It is, however, very rare that such misconduct occurs out of sheer error or forgetfulness. Usually it happens when one of the parties takes offence or severely resents certain behaviour of the other; they then deliberately fail to send out an invitation or respond to it [see also Gerdin 1981: 21]. The causes for such inter-household conflicts are contingent, but are often related to disapproved marriages or even quarrels over some trivial matters. Importantly, the severing of a ceremonial tie between two individual households affects all other agnates of both sides, and will also be passed on to the subsequent generation. It is, however, possible that the two parties restore amicable relations by resolving the conflict within a couple of years or later.

In Singarsa, the ritual obligations *vis-à-vis* other households are collectively referred to as “*makrama désa*.” There are no immediate sanctions against the negligence of such obligations except for losing one’s *sidikara* partners or *braya/gusti* as a result. Nevertheless, married women take every care not to offend their co-villagers, especially those in a special relationship with their household (*sidikara*, *gusti* or *braya*), by leaving them out of an invitation list or failing to respond to their invitation. It is said that those who tend to be lazy (*males*) about performing prescribed duties suffer the consequences: they will not be assisted by other households in the case of their own rituals. Given that the success of the ritual is largely measured by the degree of mobilisation of the participants, a badly-attended ritual impairs the reputation of the host. The presence of helpers and guests as essential elements in life crisis rituals is directly linked with the notion of *ramé*. *Ramé* denotes a state of crowdedness or gay commotion, created by many people’s busy activity. This is a positive value associated with successful rituals, and also serves to measure the social and political capacity of the host.¹⁹⁾ Thus the ceremonies with a relatively small number of ritual workers are described as “*sepi* (quiet, lonely)” in contrast to “*ramé* (gay, crowded).” On the other hand, certain households who are notably willing to lavish labour on helping other households are praised for being

18) For example, if there is illness in the household, no one from that household should attend a wedding ceremony (*semayut*); since the newly-weds are believed to be highly polluting (*sebel*), the conditions of a sick person may deteriorate.

19) For intriguing discussions on the concept of *ramé* in the state-village relationships in the historical context, see Vickers [1991: 93ff] and Warren [1993: 86].

diligent (*anteng*); when they themselves sponsor rituals (*maduwé karya*), their compound will be full of ritual workers from all corners.

A Case Study: *Odalan* at a Descent Group Temple

To illustrate the dynamism of inter-household relations in the ritual context, I shall take an example of an annual temple ceremony (*odalan*) for a descent group temple (*mrajan*), which took place in February 1993 in Singarsa.

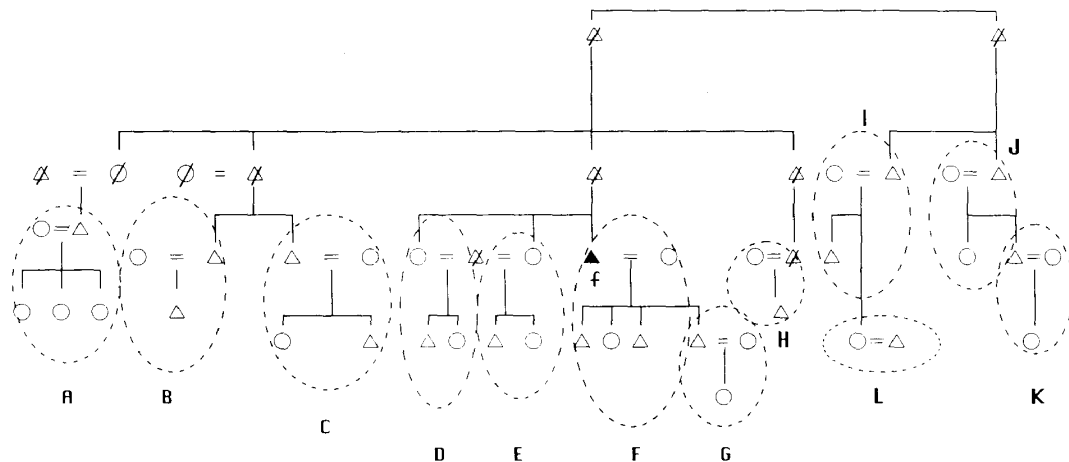


Diagram 1

The temple in this case study is an “origin point” (*kawitan*) for six *satria* households, all related by agnatic ties (Households F~K in Diagram 1). According to genealogy, the direct descendant of this ancestral line is Household F, which resides in the original compound together with Household G. Other related households (H, I, J and K) are supposed to worship at the family temple in that compound as their origin point. Instead, however, the *odalan* in question was held for the temple newly built by Déwa Gedé Karta (Household J), who had scored a remarkable success in *endek* business. All the concerned households except for Household H had agreed to turn this temple into their overarching family temple (*mrajan*), while Déwa Gedé Oka of Household F (f in the diagram) became the temple priest (*pemangku*), charged with presiding over necessary rites.²⁰⁾ Thus Household J took the initiative in organising work sessions for the preparations of offerings and ceremonial feasts, although the rest of the households jointly sponsored the ceremony by pooling cash for the expenses, and participated in preparations.

The other households presented in the diagram also offered extensive support in terms of both material contributions and ritual labour. The Households A, D, and E are all in *sidikara* relationship with the host households through past marriages.²¹⁾ They were officially invited by the hosts

20) Household H refused to have anything to do with their agnatic kin since they had cut family relations (*pegat*) with Household F after a severe conflict over inheritance.

21) There is much more complexity in the ways in which these households are connected than those presented here. A more elaborate analysis should be made in a separate paper.

(*kundang*), thus morally obliged to help with the preparations. During the ten-day period prior to the ceremony, female members of these households frequented the compound of Household J, where a large amount of offerings were made by hand. Male members were also called in when feasts were going to be prepared.

Households B and C, both of which were *jaba*, were also obliged to help with the preparation as *braya*. They actually claimed agnatic ties with the host households; since the marriage of Déwa Gedé Oka's father's brother was not legitimate, his descendants were *astra* and thus became *braya*. The members of these households were present throughout the preparing process, shouldering the most onerous tasks to be done. Aside from them, there was a large number of *braya* who came along both during the preparation and on the day of the ceremony.

It was Déwa Byang Karang of Household J who took control of the process of preparation within her compound. To ensure the production of all the necessary offering sets that are made up of numerous containers and ingredients, it was important to organise the stage-by-stage preparations effectively, commanding the labour of dozens of women. Each day women of the host households and the *braya arep* (those who are particularly close to the host households) had to do some additional tasks, such as making cakes for *pangayah* (ritual workers) at communal work sessions or cleaning up the compound after the day's work. Women of *sidikara* households, on the other hand, only helped with offering making and were served with drinks and cakes during the breaks.

As the decoration of the temple required little labour, the major task for men was to cook ceremonial meals for the day before as well as for the day of *odalan*. Although male members of the concerned *satria* households did participate in this task, male *braya* seemed more extensively involved in the process of cooking rice, chopping pig's meat, making *saté* and so forth.

In brief, ritual workers for a *triwangsa* descent group temple range from agnatic descendants of the temple, to their *sidikara* partners, and to their *braya*. They are thus different in their proximity to the temple and in their *warna* status. These differences are reflected in the actual allocation of tasks within the broad categories of work specified by gender: it is, for example, invariably *jaba* women who carry something heavy or perform physically demanding work, while *satria* men appear to spend least time in ritual preparations. Even among *braya*, it is only *braya arep* who would spend hours doing menial work, such as frying hundreds of rice dough cakes and serving refreshments to other ritual workers; more distant *braya* do not even have to attend every work session.

Women's Role in the Ritual Domain

Although a man-woman pair is the basic unit liable to religious obligations as described above, it is, on the whole, the married women who take the leading role. They take good care that their households are represented at the rituals which they are obliged to assist or attend. With regard to life crisis rituals, in particular, the occurrence of such an event as child birth, marriage, or death is made known through women's gossip in the market or in the public bathing place, prior to formal invitations from the households concerned. The actual work, such as the preparation and presentation of offerings, ceremonial gift-giving and ritual assistance, also largely falls on the shoulders of married

women. While certain tasks, especially the presentation of offerings and gift-giving, can be relegated to daughters or other female members of the household, it is the wives who decide the size and content of offerings or gifts.

When a life passage rite of large scale is held in one's house compound, the number of ritual workers would well exceed a hundred. Although the male head of the household supervises the male part of the work, i.e. the decoration of the family temple and ceremonial cooking (*mébat*) for the feast, it is his wife who sees to the organisation of the overall preparation process, deciding the appropriate allocation of tasks to achieve efficiency. Her responsibilities also include the purchase of all the required ingredients for offerings, return gifts, and other provisions. She also receives ceremonial gifts from female guests and engages them in small talk while they are served refreshments. In the words of some unmarried daughters, "Our mothers go to the front arena to receive guests, for they know how to talk properly. We don't know yet how to do it, so we just work in the kitchen." On this occasion, the wife's important task is to take note of whether all the households who ought to come actually came or not.

Each of the ritual duties for the Balinese households involves not only labour contribution but also substantial expenses required for temple levies, offering ingredients, ceremonial feasts and gifts. The source of finance for life crisis rituals varies: a young couple often use their savings for the wedding, though assisted by their parents and close relatives. Many households also borrow money from banks for ceremonial purposes. As noted earlier, particularly costly rituals including tooth-filing rites and cremations are, more often than not, sponsored jointly by agnatically-related households. As far as the purchase of the ingredients of temple offerings and of ceremonial gifts are concerned, however, most married weavers claim that they take prime responsibility, with the help of their weaving daughters. This can be verified by the fact that the weavers do not leave their loom until late at night (around 11 p.m. or even later) especially when major temple rituals or special festivities such as Galungan-Kuningan approach, because they must have cash in hand before those rituals.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the changes in the village economy, including the growth of the weaving industry and the expansion of government jobs, have entailed the increase of ritual expenses. As the financial status of most households has improved, the villagers have started to spend more money sponsoring elaborate rituals than previously. This tendency is particularly notable with regard to ceremonial clothing and the cost of entertaining guests.²²⁾ As a result, women in Singarsa face even greater pressure to earn enough income to ensure the staging of rituals of respectable scale.²³⁾

22) "The economics of rituals," including recent tendencies to partial commercialisation of ritual labour, are discussed in Nakatani [1995a: 137-148].

23) Women I knew did complain about the time-consuming nature of ritual labour for which they must put other types of work aside. The source of their dilemma was that they needed income from weaving to finance rituals, yet they could not weave when ritual preparations began. A more comprehensive analysis of the gender division of labour in ritual obligations and men's and women's perceptions of such activities will be given in a separate paper.

Conclusions

This paper has examined two sets of social relations in which the individual Balinese household is embedded. While the household (*kuren*) is the most basic unit of social organisation and is liable to a variety of ritual obligations to ensure its well-being and the prosperity of the community as a whole, it cannot fulfil these duties without co-operation with other households related by agnatic ties or by ceremonial relationships.

The first category of grouping is agnatic kin groups, which often act as unified units for the enactment of temple rituals and life cyclical rites. At the level of the house compound (*pakaran-gan*), component households closely co-operate with one another for ceremonial gift-giving or the implementation of rituals for the family temple within their compound. The households linked by immediate patriline beyond the house compound may also stage certain rituals jointly in order to reduce the financial burden for each household. Furthermore, the annual celebration (*odalan*) of descent group temples mobilises participation from a much wider circle of households who regard the temple in question as their “origin-point.” Here it must be noted that those individual households are not directly connected with the “origin-point” at the core but trace the link through the process of fission which took place in the past.

Importantly, all of these agnatic kin groups can be incorporated into the Balinese concept of “family.” The Balinese word *saméton* or *nyama*, broadly translated as “family” or “brothers,” refers to a wide range of grouping according to the context. While it can mean just siblings or the members of the same household (*kuren*), it can also indicate a cluster of agnatically related households within and beyond the house compound (*karang* and *waris*), as well as the members of the same title-group/*dadia* within the village.²⁴⁾ In my view, such elasticity of the notion of the family or *saméton/nyama* indicates the flexibility of the boundary which encloses the private arena. In other words, one cannot readily identify the point at which private interactions are replaced by public encounters.²⁵⁾ As can be seen in the case of the staging of temple rituals and life passage rites, the network of households of differing scale can act as a unified unit on different occasions, stressing its internal unity and co-operation in each case.²⁶⁾

24) In the extreme, the term “*saméton*” may even designate all fellow human beings. Therefore, those who are considered as one’s *saméton* cannot be pre-determined, although they are most likely to hold the same title at least.

25) Similarly, in the case of a fishing village in Langkawi, Malaysia, [Carsten 1987] argues that there is a continuum, rather than an opposition of private/public, between the concept of the individual household and that of the community as a whole, on the basis of her analyses of the multiple meanings of “*kampung*.” See also Wikan [1990: 41ff] and Hobart [1977: 196] for critiques of the Geertz from different points of view.

26) For the Geertz, the private kin group suddenly transcends the boundary and becomes an actor in the public domain when it erects a temple, as a *dadia*, on the hamlet-owned land [1975: 60]. It may be true that such a group has acquired certain social recognition from the hamlet council who gave consent to such a move. However, the erection of the temple on the “public” land does not transform the basic organising principle of the group in question: that is, the sharing of the “origin-point (*kawitan*).” Therefore, those who worship at the commoner *dadia* temple are still confined to the *dadia* members and the former members who have married out. The villagers in Singarsa consider the temples as public ones only when anyone in the village can worship (*muspa*) there.

In addition to the agnatic kin groups, another set of inter-household relations, i.e. *sidikara* and *gusti-braya* ties, also serve as a source of ritual labour. The maintenance of such ties is essential because the degree of success of a given ritual is partly measured by the number of ritual helpers from outside the host household or compound.

This paper has also indicated that the Balinese women play decisive roles in the formation and maintenance of the above ceremonial ties. First of all, the fact that the *sidikara* and *gusti-braya* ties are based on past marriages significantly modifies the putative emphasis on agnatic links in Balinese social and ritual relations. As Schefold [1991] argues, it is women who actually move between the households and thus connect them upon their marriage. Especially where a *sidikara* partnership obtains, a married daughter freely goes back to her natal house compound to contribute her labour to ritual preparations. She also continues to present family offerings to her original family temple and worship there.

Married women are more heavily involved in ritual activities than their husbands; moreover, they often take financial responsibility for providing materials for offerings and gifts as well. As far as the ritual domain is concerned, therefore, it is married women who most often represent their households through their work. That is, the offerings made and presented, and the gifts bought and taken by women for ritual purposes all serve to manifest the presence of their households in the required manner, whereby the existing ties are successfully maintained between humans and gods, between humans and their ancestors, as well as between the households.

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